**Can I describe the difference between groups or individuals affected by an evaluation study?**

1. The **sponsor** is the agency or individual that authorizes the evaluation and provides the resources for evaluation.
2. The **client** is the specific agency or individual who requests the evaluation.
3. The **stakeholders** include anyone who has a stake in the evaluation.
4. The **audiences** include the different individuals, groups and agencies that have an interest in the evaluation and would receive its results.

**Can I explain what a noninformational use of evaluation is?**

When a program evaluation is complete, the report is full of information that could and should be useful to the various stakeholders interested in the report. This information is used for various purposes. It is easy to see how this information can be used. The noninformational uses are not so easy to see. They are the off unintended benefits of evaluation such as empowerment of stakeholders who are often not involved in evaluations and would gain skills by being involved and the fact that the visibility of an evaluation can change people’s behavior, sometimes even for the better. Evaluations can be educational and they can create more of a democratic environment when they involve all levels of stakeholders. These are examples of the noninformational use of evaluation.

**Could there be a time when program evaluation is not appropriate?**

* A program may exist that lacks sufficient impact to warrant an evaluation.
* If the results of the evaluation are not going to be used in a useful way.
* An evaluation may not yield any useful or valuable information
* The type of the evaluation may not match with the stage of the program.
  + Formative evaluation can be used early in a program
  + Summative evaluation may not be appropriate depending on the stage.
* Propriety of the evaluation may be in question
  + It may be questioned for less than noble reasons
  + Propriety is one of the 4 attributes of ethical evaluation
  + An evaluation that is conducted with propriety respects the rights and dignity of those involved

**When might be a good time to use an external evaluator?**

When the decision that is being made through program evaluation is summative in nature, it may be useful to use an external evaluator. External evaluations are seen to be more impartial, objective and credible to outside audiences. External evaluators may be in a better position to deliver bad news if that is necessary.

**Is it ever a good idea to combine an internal and external evaluator?**

Combining the two types of evaluators can eliminate many of the disadvantages of one type or the other. Costs can be reduced by having the internal evaluator collect most of the data. The external evaluator ensures credibility and can remain impartial.

**Why is it important to identify the potential audiences of an evaluation report?**

The final evaluation will include information that will address the needs of several different stakeholder groups. That in itself shows the need know what stakeholder groups will be the audience. It is essential to clarify audiences to clarify the purpose of the study. Involving different groups in the evaluation brings together various viewpoints and provides focus and direction to the study.

**Are there ways to make evaluations more cost effective?**

The use of a combination of internal and external evaluators could be a cost saving measure. You could get the expertise and perceived credibility of an external evaluator, but the internal evaluator could do most of the daily leg work. The internal evaluator could be the data gatherer and look after the jobs that are time consuming and therefore costly. Another way to save some costs is to take advantage of the vast communication paths that we have today. Personal interviews are best, but surveys and questionnaires could be done through e-mail. Information sharing could be done in by an electronic method.

**Are evaluations political?**

Whenever resources are redistributed or priorities redefined it becomes somewhat political. It is important that an evaluator understand the political undertones.

These two chapters were different than the others we have read so far. I think they will be useful in our review of an evaluation report assignment and the planning of an evaluation assignment. There was valuable information that could be used to clarify purpose in an evaluation. It outlined methods of gathering information and describing the object of an evaluation. I realized how important it was to clarify all the stakeholder groups before starting an evaluation. Who will need what information at the end of the evaluation? If you do not clearly outline the stakeholder groups, you may get to the end of an evaluation and realize that some important information has been missed. For example, what if I was evaluating my educational assistants on their performance delivery according to the set standard? I realized that the evaluation results would be important to administrators, board office personal, the educational assistants themselves but I left out teachers. Obviously the teachers would be a huge stakeholder in the results of this evaluation. I may not have the information that I need if I leave them out of the evaluation. I would be missing huge pieces of perspective that could be used in the evaluation and I would not have the proper information to report back to them when the report was finished.

External evaluators fit my view of what I always thought evaluation was. It is like the spy from the outside comes in to misconstrue your words, write them in a top secret report and shared them with someone who could make you life miserable. I am exaggerating of course, but I am now learning that I was not really aware of all the things that could be considered evaluation. I had a very narrow and negative view. I now see some value to having an outside evaluator come in to do a program evaluation. Some people, probably not me, might be more comfortable talking to someone that is impartial and not involved in the day to day operations of the program. The idea of someone coming in may be less threatening for some, An external person could deliver negative results if that were necessary, because they are less emotionally involved.

An internal evaluator also has some benefits. Some people would feel more comfortable talking to someone who understands the daily workings of the program. An inside evaluator is not expensive. They know the program history and goals, so that would save time. An interval evaluator may not be able to deliver bad news about a program if that were necessary.

A combination approach does seem to make sense. The internal evaluator and the external evaluator could work together and eliminate most of the limitations of both. It creates an outside and inside perspective. One would have an emotional or personal connection to the program and one would be able to be impartial. The internal evaluator could do the leg work and help cut costs and the external evaluator could deliver the final evaluation reports.

When I was reading the description of the different methods for evaluation it occurred to me that each stakeholder could have a very different perspective of the program description and what area they feel the evaluation should target. This idea emphasizes the necessity of talking to representatives from all of the stakeholder groups. The purpose of the last staff meeting that I attended was to look at our report cards and either make changes or go with a completely different report card. The principal had found a sample from another division that he thought was wonderful. We broke up into the area groups for discussion and the principal moved around from group to group. Every group seemed to have good and bad things to say about the sample report card. It was interesting how each group described the report card very differently even though we were all evaluating the exact same piece of paper. Each group’s description was different, in some way, than the principals original description.

The other thing that struck me as interesting about these methods was the observation portion. Much can be learned from the observation of programs. Observations can often reveal variations between how a program is running and how it is intended to run. It can often reveal a variation on how a program is running and how someone might describe it in an interview.

One thing that might be difficult about the evaluation process is the idea that during the process of an evaluation, the object being evaluated my change and therefore the description of it would change. It is like a living thing and constant redefinition might be necessary.